

CONFIRMATION OF ANTONY JOHN BLINKEN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the nomination of Antony J. Blinken to be U.S. Secretary of State.

Mr. Blinken has decades of experience in foreign policy, beginning in the early 1990s as the Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs. He has since risen to senior foreign policy positions on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch, including as Democratic Staff Director on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and as Principal Deputy National Security Adviser and Deputy Secretary of State in the Obama administration. I have had occasion to work with him over the years and can testify to his professionalism, diligence, and good judgment.

Mr. Blinken faces an enormous task. The last 4 years have been rife with chaos, division, and ineffective unilateralism. Under the so-called slogan of "America First," President Trump turned his back on allies and emboldened our adversaries, leaving the United States weakened, vulnerable, and alone. Mr. Blinken must not only reverse the damage done by President Trump; he must reinvigorate U.S. leadership in a manner that meets the challenges we face today—from the existential threat of climate change, to a more aggressive and confrontational China.

To begin, Mr. Blinken must restore our alliances, rebuild our global partnerships, expand our commercial ties, and rejoin the critical international agreements and organizations recklessly abandoned by President Trump. Already President Biden has reversed Trump's Muslim ban, rejoined the Paris climate accords, and recommitted to the World Health Organization. In the coming months, Mr. Blinken must work with our allies to develop a united front to counter the threats posed by adversaries such as China, Russia, and Iran. He must reaffirm our commitment to NATO. He must reestablish U.S. leadership in providing development and humanitarian assistance around the world, reasserting U.S. values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

As importantly, Mr. Blinken must restore the State Department itself. The Trump administration routinely undermined and smeared our dedicated career foreign and civil service officers. Rebuilding the morale of our talented public servants will be imperative for the successful execution of our foreign policy.

Given the breadth of his knowledge and experience, I am confident Mr. Blinken is the right person to meet America's foreign policy challenges, and I support his confirmation as U.S. Secretary of State.

59TH INAUGURAL CEREMONIES

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I request to have printed in the CONGRESSIONAL

RECORD my full remarks delivered on January 20, 2021, at the 59th inaugural ceremonies.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Mr. President, Well, I should have known when Senator Klobuchar got involved, at least there would be a touch of snow up here this morning. Of all the things we considered, I don't think snow was on my agenda until I walked out the door a moment ago.

But thank you, Senator Klobuchar, and thanks to the other members of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Inauguration as we officially begin the 59th Inaugural Ceremony. I also want to thank the Joint Committee staff and our partners, particularly our security partners, for the way they have dealt with unprecedented circumstances.

When I chaired the Inauguration four years ago, I shared President Reagan's 1981 description of this event as commonplace and miraculous. Commonplace because we've done it every four years since 1789. Miraculous because we've done it every four years since 1789.

Americans have celebrated this moment during war, during depression, and now, during pandemic. Once again, all three branches of our government come together as the Constitution envisions. Once again, we renew our commitment to "Our Determined Democracy, Forging a More Perfect Union."

That theme for this Inauguration, "Our Determined Democracy, Forging a More Perfect Union," was announced by the Joint Committee before the election—with the belief that the United States can only fulfill its promise and set an example for others if we are always working to be better than we have been.

The Constitution established that determined democracy with its first three words, declaring the people as the source of the government. The Articles of Confederation hadn't done that. The Magna Carta hadn't done that. Only the Constitution says the government exists because the people are the source of the reason it exists. They immediately followed those first three words with the words "to form a more perfect Union." The founders did not say "to form a perfect Union." They did not claim that in our new country nothing would need to be improved. Fortunately, they understood that always working to be better would be the hallmark of a great democracy.

The freedoms we have today, the nation we have today, is not here just because it happened, and they aren't complete.

A great democracy, working through the successes and failures of our history, striving to be better than it had been. And we are more than we have been and we are less than we hope to be.

The assault on our Capitol at this very place just two weeks ago reminds us that a government designed to balance and check itself is both fragile and resilient.

During the last year, the pandemic challenged our free and open society and called for extraordinary determination and sacrifice—and still challenges us today. Meeting that challenge head on have been and are health care workers, scientists, first responders, essential frontline workers, and so many others we depend on in so many ways.

Today, we come to this moment. People all over the world, as we're here, are watching and will watch what we do here.

Our government comes together. The Congress and the Courts join the transition of executive responsibility.

One political party more pleased today, and on every inaugural day, than the other.

But this is not a moment of division. It's a moment of unification. A new administration begins and brings with it a new beginning. And with that our great national debate goes forward and a determined democracy will continue to be essential in pursuit of a more perfect Union and a better future for all Americans. What a privilege for me to join you today.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO CHAD METZLER

Mr. KING. Mr. President, if you ask 100 Americans what qualities they want in a public servant, I would bet there are a few common words that would come up. Smart. Dedicated. Bipartisan. Honest. Trustworthy. Humble. Simply put, they will describe Chad Metzler—my legislative director for the past 8 years and one of the finest public servants I have ever met. That is why today I rise with a heavy heart to wish Chad well as he prepares to embark on a new adventure.

Each of us in this body understands that the Senate's work is not entrusted solely to Senators. Our names may be on the door, but we can't claim successes on our own. Our staffs play a critical role in our efforts to navigate the complex challenges facing the Nation and serve the American people. That is why hiring the right people is one of the most important decisions any Senator makes. If a Senator is lucky, they will find staffers who have extensive experience and knowledge of the legislative process; who aren't afraid to challenge their boss's preconceived notions in the pursuit of better policy; who are kind, level-headed public servants; who are generous colleagues; who understand the importance of the faith placed in us by the American people and work every day to live up to this enormous responsibility. If a Senator is lucky, they will find staffers who check a few of those boxes. If they find someone who can do all of the above, they have hit the jackpot. When Chad Metzler joined my team as legislative director in 2013, I and the people of Maine hit the jackpot because he is all of those things and more.

Over the past 8 years, I have had the privilege to have Chad lead my legislative team. Sadly, good fortune only lasts for so long. As Chad transitions into a new, exciting opportunity, I am confident that he will continue to make vital contributions to the American people in his new role, but before he leaves us, I want to take a moment to reflect on all his contributions to the Senate and the country.

From my early days in the Senate, Chad's experience was invaluable. Prior to joining my office, he spent 17 years working for Senator Herb Kohl, from his home State of Wisconsin. Throughout that tenure, Chad spearheaded a number of important, varied responsibilities—from serving as the Senator's legislative director, to holding the position of staff director on the Senate Special Committee on Aging, to

managing Senator Kohl's portfolio on the Appropriations Committee. That combination of skills made Chad a rare breed—an experienced Senate staffer who possessed both a generalist's understanding of the big picture and a specialist's ability to get into the weeds of thorny policy issues.

Chad's background was invaluable in helping to bring me up to speed on the Senate's parliamentary procedures and the body's unique, frustrating quirks. As a former Governor, I faced the unenviable task of shifting from the executive role to being just 1 of 100. As an Independent used to relying on bipartisan coalitions, the Senate's often rigid partisanship presented its own challenges. Chad responded with creative thinking and dogged persistence, and the results were quickly apparent.

Just a few short months after I came to Washington, Chad helped me lead a bipartisan compromise on student loan rates that is projected to save taxpayers \$715 million over the next 10 years and an estimated \$30 billion for students over the following 4 years. That legislation set the tone for our office—a focus on rolling up our sleeves, bipartisan work, coalition building, and commonsense solutions to the problems that plague the American people.

In the years that followed, Chad and his legislative team helped to build on that mission through level-headed, analytical thinking. Among other successes, we have worked across the aisle to pass legislation that confronts the opioid epidemic sweeping our communities; improves America's insufficient cyber defenses; helps more working families access childcare; and addresses the \$12 billion maintenance backlog at America's national parks. Each of these legislative successes came about through hard work and bipartisan discussions. More importantly, each made life better for our constituents.

Obviously, Chad is a talented legislative craftsman, but somehow, he was an even better leader and person. For the past 8 years, Chad has guided my legislative team with a steady hand, helping dozens of young public servants in my office grow and thrive. He treats everyone he meets with respect and kindness, never once talking down to someone with less experience or a different perspective. Just as important, his sense of humor has remained intact through a quarter century of Senate service, ensuring that even in the midst of serious work, we don't take ourselves too seriously.

When I was Governor, I said I always was looking for staff who demonstrate both competence and kindness. You can have some with one trait, some with the other, a few with neither, but when you find folks with both, you invite them onboard immediately. Chad doesn't just have those qualities; he personifies them.

As you can gather from my remarks, Chad is an irreplaceable part of my team, and the Senate is poorer for losing him.

But, as Chad always does, I feel the need to take a step back and analyze the entire situation. In doing so, I find a few key reasons for gratitude.

I am grateful that even though Chad is moving on, he leaves behind a team that is well-educated in the Metzler School of Public Service. His years of mentorship have crafted our team into one of the sharpest, most dedicated staffs on Capitol Hill, and I know his influence and example will be felt in our office for years to come.

I am grateful that although our body is losing a dedicated public servant, the country is not. In the days ahead, Chad will begin a new opportunity that will put his skills to good use. This new role will allow him to continue fighting for pragmatic, principled solutions that move our country forward. Now more than ever, we need folks like him working on tough problems.

Finally, I am grateful that even though Chad will no longer be on my staff, he will forever remain a trusted adviser and friend. Chad's intellect, professionalism, and warmth are rare attributes; to possess all of these qualities, while still remaining humble and even-keeled, is even rarer. I consider myself extremely fortunate to know him and look forward to continuing that association.

Mr. President, I have a simple philosophy of leadership that has guided me throughout my life: Hire good people, and take credit for what they do. When I hired Chad Metzler, I made one of the smartest leadership decisions of my life—bringing on the ideal partner to break bipartisan logjams and make life better for the people of Maine. I am saddened to say goodbye to my adviser and friend today, but I know that his best is yet to come. I can't wait to see what is next.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO NEVA FRICKE BELL

• Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the 105th birthday of a proud Hoosier, Neva Fricke Bell, born on January 26, 1916. Neva lived through the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, two World Wars, the Great Depression, and many other tragedies, as well as great celebrations, including her marriage to Simeon Bell for 60 plus years, the birth of her loving children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. A Boilermaker through and through, Neva's tenacity and great style are a testament to all Hoosiers and all Americans that our great State and Nation endures and celebrates victories great and small. Happy Birthday, Neva Fricke Bell. •

RECOGNIZING GORHAM MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL'S SOPHOMORE STUDENT COUNCIL

• Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I am proud to recognize the Sophomore Stu-

dent Council at Gorham Middle & High School as December's Granite Staters of the Month. When a vendor accidentally sent extra chocolate as part of the Sophomore Student Council's fundraiser, the students launched a new effort. Instead of reselling the surplus chocolate to benefit their class, they decided to sell the extra chocolate to benefit their school's food pantry.

Like most events this year, the Sophomore Student Council modified a fundraiser that they would typically hold in-person to be an online event. One of the participants in the fundraiser, the aunt of Sophomore Student Council Representative Emma LaPierre, bought three boxes of chocolate to benefit her niece's class. However, instead of receiving the expected three boxes of chocolate, she received three entire cases of chocolate. The vendor, World's Finest Chocolate, was alerted to the mistake, but due to safety concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic, said that they could not take the chocolate back. Emma, along with other members of the Sophomore Student Council, decided that rather than sell the extra chocolate to profit their class, they would use the additional funds to benefit their school's food and supply pantry. After selling the chocolate at a reduced rate, the students successfully raised \$200 for the pantry, which provides weekend meals, snacks, and school supplies to any student in need. Following the students' efforts, a local paper published an article about the fundraiser, which inspired a couple in the community to send a \$100 check to the school to benefit their food and supply pantry.

Emma and the other students in Gorham's Sophomore Student Council exemplify the way that small acts of kindness can make a big difference in a community. Their selfless decision to raise money on behalf of a community-wide resource, rather than keep the funds for their class, helped to spur other acts of kindness in their community from which the whole school and community benefited. I am honored to recognize their efforts and proud that their efforts reflect the Granite State's core value—the belief that individuals should step up when they see a problem—and that when they do, their actions have a ripple effect that strengthens the entire community. The Gorham Sophomore Student Council has done just that. •

RECOGNIZING: 44EAST

• Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as a senior member and former chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, each month I recognize and celebrate the American entrepreneurial spirit by highlighting the success of a small business in my home State of Idaho. Today I am pleased to honor 44East in Meridian as the Idaho Small Business of the Month for January 2021.